

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) For a switched telephone network for alerting and warning the general public, switching equipment comprising:

a switch operating in said switched telephone network and operable to:

(a) establish telephonic communications between callers and called parties over a predetermined number of subscriber lines with a standard ring pattern, and

(b) non-verbally alert people to seek emergency instructions from another medium without answering a telephone, said switch being operable to:

(i) receive ~~and decode~~ an emergency alert message signal broadcast from a coordination center ~~central authority as a single command event~~ intended to alert and warn the general public, said emergency alert message signal ~~having been encoded to~~ signifying a geographical region area of concern; and

(ii) if area codes and exchanges handled by said switch are within said geographical region area of concern transmit an emergency ring pattern over all available ones of said subscriber lines handled by said switch that are in area codes and exchanges within said geographical region area of concern without discriminating between subscribers, said emergency ring pattern simultaneously ringing a plurality of subscribers in a repetitive pattern with pauses of varying durations ~~that is discontinued after a preselected number of repetitions.~~

2. (currently amended) For a switched telephone network according to claim 1 wherein said switching equipment comprises:

a link for sending a broadcast signal signifying ~~the occurrence of said single command event, in order to broadcast~~ the need for a recurrence elsewhere of a response performed locally by said switch ~~in response to said single command event.~~

3. (original) For a switched telephone network according to claim 2 wherein said link comprises a common channel signaling network.

4. (original) For a switched telephone network according to claim 2 wherein said link comprises a common channel signaling network coupled to said switch, said switch being operable to transmit said broadcast signal to said link.

5. (original) For a switched telephone network according to claim 2 wherein said broadcast signal includes information signifying a destination for said broadcast signal.

6. (original) For a switched telephone network according to claim 2 wherein said broadcast signal includes information signifying an emergency type.

7. (currently amended) For a switched telephone network according to claim 1 wherein said switching equipment comprises:

a database having information about said subscriber lines, said switching equipment being operable to send said emergency ring pattern to a portion of said

subscriber lines from said database in response to said single command event.

8. (original) For a switched telephone network according to claim 1 wherein said switching equipment is operable to transmit said emergency ring pattern at different times for different groupings of the subscriber lines.

9. (original) For a switched telephone network according to claim 8 wherein said switching equipment is operable to multiplex said emergency ring pattern in order to ring in the same time period with a different phase.

10. (original) For a switched telephone network according to claim 8 wherein said subscriber lines are segregated into a plurality of ordered tiers, said switching equipment being operable to sequentially ring individual ones of said ordered tiers exclusively before completing and sequencing to the next one of said tiers.

11. (currently amended) For a switched telephone network according to claim 1 wherein said switching equipment comprises:

a link for sending a broadcast signal ~~signifying the occurrence of said single command event~~ to one or more cellular telephone networks and PBXs, in order to broadcast the need for a recurrence elsewhere of a response performed locally by said switch ~~in response to said single command event.~~

12. (currently amended) For a switched telephone , switching equipment comprising:

a plurality of switches operating in said switched telephone network and each operable to:

(a) establish telephonic communications between callers and called parties over a plurality of subscriber lines with a standard ring pattern, and

(b) non-verbally alert people to seek emergency instructions from another medium without answering a telephone, said switch being operable to:

(i) receive ~~and decode~~ an emergency alert message signal broadcast from a coordination center ~~central authority as a single command event~~, said special emergency alert message signal ~~having been encoded to~~ signifying a geographical region area of concern; and

(ii) if area codes and exchanges handled by said switch are within said geographical area region of concern transmit an emergency ring pattern over all available ones of said subscriber lines handled by said switch that are in area codes and exchanges within said geographical area region of concern without discriminating between subscribers ~~in response to a single command event conveyed to each of said switches~~, said special emergency ring pattern simultaneously ringing a plurality of subscribers in a repetitive pattern with pauses of varying durations ~~that is discontinued after a preselected number of repetitions.~~

13. (currently amended) For a switched telephone network according to claim

12 wherein said switching equipment comprises:

a link for sending a broadcast signal ~~signifying the occurrence of said single command event~~, in order to broadcast the need for a recurrence elsewhere of a response performed locally by said switch ~~in response to said single command event~~.

14. (original) For a switched telephone network according to claim 13 wherein said broadcast signal includes information signifying a destination for said broadcast signal.

15. (original) For a switched telephone network according to claim 13 wherein said broadcast signal includes information signifying an emergency type.

16. (currently amended) For a switched telephone network according to claim 12 wherein said switching equipment comprises:

a database having information about said subscriber lines, said switching equipment being operable to send said emergency ring pattern to a portion of said subscriber lines from said database ~~in response to said single command event~~.

17. (original) For a switched telephone network according to claim 12 wherein said switching equipment is operable to transmit said emergency ring pattern at different times for different groupings of the subscriber lines.

18. (original) For a switched telephone network according to claim 17 wherein said switching equipment is operable to multiplex said emergency ring pattern in order to ring in the same time period with a different phase.

19. (original) For a switched telephone network according to claim 17 wherein said subscriber lines are segregated into a plurality of ordered tiers, said switching equipment being operable to sequentially ring individual ones of said ordered tiers exclusively before completing and sequencing to the next one of said tiers.

20. (currently amended) For a switched telephone network according to claim 12 wherein said switching equipment comprises:

a link for sending a broadcast signal ~~signifying the occurrence of said single command event~~ to one or more cellular telephone networks and PBXs, in order to broadcast the need for a recurrence elsewhere of a response performed locally by said switch ~~in response to said single command event~~.

21. (canceled)

22. (canceled)

23. (canceled)

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26. (canceled)

27. (canceled)

28. (canceled)

29. (canceled)

30. (canceled)

31. (canceled)

32. (canceled)

33. (canceled)

34. (currently amended) A method employing a switched telephone network for broadcasting an emergency signal ~~in response to a single command event~~, comprising the steps of:

establishing telephonic communications between callers and called parties over a predetermined number of subscriber lines with a standard ring pattern,

receiving ~~and decoding~~ an emergency alert message ~~signal~~ broadcast from a coordination center ~~central authority as a single command event~~, said emergency alert message ~~signal~~ ~~having been encoded to~~ signifying a geographical area ~~region~~ of concern;

determining if area codes and exchanges handled by said network are within said geographical area ~~region~~ of concern; and

if area codes and exchanges are within said geographical area ~~region~~ of concern transmitting an emergency ring pattern over all available ones of said subscriber lines that are in area codes and exchanges within said geographical area ~~region~~ of concern

without discriminating between subscribers in order to non-verbally alert people to seek emergency instructions from another medium without answering a telephone, said emergency ring pattern simultaneously ringing a plurality of subscribers in a repetitive pattern with pauses of varying durations ~~that is discontinued after a preselected number of repetitions.~~

35. (currently amended) A method according to claim 34 comprising the step of:

sending a broadcast signal ~~signifying the occurrence of said single command event~~, in order to broadcast the need for a recurrence elsewhere of a response performed locally ~~in response to said single command event.~~

36. (original) A method according to claim 35 wherein the broadcast signal includes information signifying a destination for said broadcast signal.

37. (original) A method according to claim 35 wherein said broadcast signal includes information signifying an emergency type.

38. (currently amended) A method according to claim 34 wherein a database of subscriber lines is maintained for local switching equipment, the method including the step of:

sending said emergency ring pattern to a portion of said subscriber lines from



said database in response to said single command event.

39. (original) A method according to claim 34 wherein the step of transmitting an emergency ring pattern is performed by transmitting said emergency ring pattern at different times for different groupings of lines.

40. (original) A method according to claim 39 wherein the step of transmitting an emergency ring pattern is performed by multiplexing said emergency ring pattern in order to ring different lines in the same time period with a different phase.

41. (original) A method according to claim 39 wherein a central office has jurisdiction over a plurality of subscriber lines that are segregated into a plurality of ordered tiers, the step of transmitting a ring pattern being performed by sequentially ringing individual ones of said ordered tiers exclusively before completing and sequencing to the next one of said tiers.

42. (cancelled)

43. (previously presented) For a switched telephone network according to claim 12 comprising:

additional dedicated computers programmed to accomplish the special ring pattern to the entire general public.

44. (previously presented) For a switched telephone network according to claim 12 wherein said plurality of switches are operable to send the special emergency ring pattern nationwide from one central office to another in order to alert the entire general public.